

One More Step in Your Back-to-School Ritual

08/06/07

It's time for the annual back-to-school ritual, but as parents purchase school supplies and new clothes for their kids, there is one more step they need to take.

Children in Missouri are required to be up-to-date on their immunizations before returning to class. While the majority of a child's vaccinations will be given by age 2, kids will need several booster shots before entering kindergarten, including vaccinations against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B and chickenpox.

A child may be exempt from receiving the varicella (chickenpox) vaccination with a statement signed by the parent, guardian or physician indicating the month and year the child had chickenpox.

Immunity from some childhood vaccines can decrease over time, and adolescents are at greater risk for catching certain diseases. Teens need to get booster shots to be better protected. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends children get booster shots at their 12-year-old check up for tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and meningitis. In addition, the CDC encourages parents to consider vaccinating their daughters age 9 or older against Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which can lead to cervical cancer.

A complete list of vaccinations required before children may enter Missouri child care facilities or schools can be found by visiting the Springfield-Greene County Health Department Web site at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org>.

Students who have recently moved into the area from another state should visit the Springfield-Greene County Health Department or their health care provider for a review of their vaccination record, as requirements may differ from state to state.

Vaccination exemptions are allowed for medical or religious reasons. For more information, contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at (866) 628-9891.

The benefits of protecting children against vaccine-preventable diseases far outweigh the temporary discomfort of the shots and the low risk of side effects. Not only is the vaccinated child protected against illness, but also others around him are better protected against diseases he now **won't** be spreading.

All required immunizations are provided at no cost to children through age 18 by visiting the Westside Public Health Center, located at 660 S. Scenic. During the month of August, walk in clinics will be held Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm. Parents can also make an appointment by calling (417) 874-1220.